Unit .27

Session .03

Jesus Prepares His Disciples

Scripture

John 20:19-29

19 When it was evening of that first day of the week,
the disciples were gathered together with the doors
locked because they feared the Jews. Jesus came, stood
among them, and said to them, "Peace be with you."
20 Having said this, he showed them his hands and
his side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the
Lord. **21** Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me, I also send you." **22** After
saying this, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the
Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive the sins of any, they are
forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are
retained." **24** But Thomas (called "Twin"), one of the
Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. **25** So the
other disciples were telling him, "We've seen the Lord!"
But he said to them, "If I don't see the mark of the nails
in his hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails,
and put my hand into his side, I will never believe."
26 A week later his disciples were indoors again, and
Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were
locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said,
"Peace be with you." **27** Then he said to Thomas, "Put
your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your
hand and put it into my side. Don't be faithless, but
believe." **28** Thomas responded to him, "My Lord and
my God!" **29** Jesus said, "Because you have seen me,
you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen
and yet believe."

Intro Options

Main Point:
Just as the Father sent Jesus into the world, Jesus also sends us to be on mission.

Option 1

For this option, most of your students will be an audience; ask for three pairs of volunteers. Each pair is going to have to guess four words; whichever pair guesses the four words fastest is the winner (have a member of the studio audience keep the official stopwatch). One member of the pair will be given the words and will have to try to get the second member to say the words. All three pairs will get the same four words.

Have two of the pairs exit the room while the first pair remains; then have the first pair go. The four words are peace, joy, mission, and faith. When they've gone, mark their time. Bring in the second pair and have them go; record their time. Finally, bring in the third pair; have them go, and record their time.

Who actually wins isn't a big deal. What we're looking for is what words they used to talk about peace, joy, mission, and faith. Ask the audience for other words they might have used to get someone to say these four words. What do our proposed words show about what we think of these concepts? In today's lesson, the resurrected Jesus will impart each of these four to His disciples; let's see how the resurrected Jesus brings each of these blessings to His disciples then and now.

Option 2

In many stories, there is a turn-around; a point in the story where the protagonist's attitude changes from near-despair to enthusiasm and hope. The sports team is all but defeated, but then something happens that re-ignites the fire in their eyes. The hero or heroine is face-down in exhaustion before the enemy, but something happens that gives him or her the strength to rise again. Something happens that makes it seem impossible for the couple to get together, but then something else happens that causes hope in each other to rise again. Your students are going to explore this turn-around concept. They should form small groups and choose one of the following options:

- They make a list of turn-around tropes (frequently-used story components) to be handy for screenwriters to use. For example, some turn-around causes might be an invigorating speech, remembering the reason for the mission, the arrival of help, the sacrifice of another character, a revelation of the truth, etc.
- A skit (or comic trip) showing "the ultimate turn-around." This skit could be humorous and over-the-top, so long as it shows some turn-around tropes.

Let students prepare and show their lists/skits. What similarities do you see across different turn-arounds?

Tell them that in today's lesson, we'll see Jesus do a great turn-around: He will come to the disciples after the resurrection and turn them from near-despair and fear to enthusiasm and zeal and power. As you read the story, look to see what Hollywood turn-around tropes are real in the John 20 story.

TEACHING PLAN

Read John 20:19-20.

It had been a whirlwind of a weekend for Jesus' disciples. The One they expected to restore the kingdom to Israel had been crucified (Acts 1:6). But on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene announced to them that she had seen Jesus (John 20:18). As we come to today's text, we see Jesus' disciples hunkered down with locked doors because they feared the Jewish leaders. However, neither the grave clothes nor the locked door was an obstacle to Jesus. He simply appeared in their midst.

John's account of this astounding appearance focuses on three statements Jesus made to His disciples. The first was a greeting that recalled Jesus' promise to give them a peace that would overcome their troubled hearts and their fear (John 14:27; 16:33). Imagine the comfort those words offered the fearful disciples. In fact, what an encouragement for all of Jesus' followers who are sent into the world on His mission. Even in a troubled world where we face suffering and death, God's peace guards our hearts against fear and anxiety.

- **How does the peace of God guard our hearts against fear and anxiety? When have you experienced God's peace even though you were facing the troubles of the world?**

The announcement of peace was only the beginning of Jesus' message when He appeared to His disciples. With the next statement, He was ready to send them on a mission.

Read John 20:21-23.

Jesus prepared His disciples for this statement in two ways. First, He showed them His hands and side. The scars on His hands and side were marks of His suffering and His victory. He had overcome death, which was exactly why His disciples were overjoyed when they saw Him.

Second, Jesus repeated His greeting of peace. With this, He offered them this mission: Just as Jesus was sent by God, Jesus would also send His disciples out into the world. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus frequently referred to Himself as One sent by God. In alignment with that sending, He sends His followers

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 96, DDG)

Evangelism

It is the duty and privilege of every Christian and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all thus rests upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Just as the Father sent Jesus into the world, Jesus also sends us to be on mission.

John 20

19-20. "The disciples had huddled together behind locked doors out of fear of the Jewish authorities, when Jesus suddenly stood in their midst. After issuing the traditional Jewish greeting, 'Peace" (shalom; v. 19), Jesus identified himself to his followers by showing them his nail-pierced hands and the wound in his side (v. 20), then commissioned them. Some, especially Peter, may initially have been apprehensive to see Jesus in light of their less-than-perfect performance surrounding Jesus's crucifixion. But joy prevailed, and Jesus showed no sign of ill will but rather attended to the business at hand (v. 20). Startlingly, the risen Lord can walk through closed doors. This indicates that resurrected bodies are no longer subject to the same limitations that apply to our present earthly bodies. On other occasions, Jesus is able to vanish from sight at an instant (Luke 24:31). His followers may mistake him for a ghost (Luke 24:39) or initially fail to recognize him (Luke 24:16; John 20:14; 21:4). But while Jesus's glorified body can walk through closed doors and appear or disappear apparently at will, it is still the glorified body of the same Jesus who was crucified only a short time before his resurrection appearances."[1]

22. At first, the timing seems confusing. It appears that Jesus gave His disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of His resurrection. Yet, about forty days after His resurrection, Jesus instructed His disciples to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). This gift came on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, enabling the disciples to carry out the mission they had been given (Acts 2:1-47).

The key to understanding verse 23 is the detail that Jesus "breathed on them." This is most likely some sort of symbolic action. D. A. Carson suggests that the exhaling and command to receive the Spirit "are best understood as a kind of acted parable pointing forward to the full enduement still to come (though in the past for John's readers)."[2]

In Defense (p. 98, DDG)

"Thomas's confession of Jesus as his Lord (Greek, Kyrios) and God (Greek, Theos) provides a literary link with the references to Jesus as God in the prologue (1:1, 18). This is one of the strongest texts in the NT on the deity of Christ (see 1:1). Some cults try to explain away this clear affirmation of Jesus' deity by arguing that Thomas's statement was merely an exclamation of astonishment that, in effect, took God's name in vain. Such an explanation is unthinkable, however, given the strong Jewish moral convictions of the day and because it is not consistent with the text, which explicitly says that Thomas said these words to him, that is, to Jesus. Thomas's statement is in fact a clear confession of his newly found faith in Jesus as his Lord and God. John's entire purpose in writing this book is that all readers come to confess Jesus as their Lord and God in the same way that Thomas did."[3]

TEACHING PLAN

Jesus' words here echo His prayer the night before His death. Jesus prayed a number of things for His disciples, but He also declared that He would send them just as He had been sent (John 17:18). Jesus invites us to participate in the same mission in which He participated. His Father sent Him, and He asks us to go on mission with Him, sending us with His peace and commanding us to love others and speak the truth with grace.

- **How does Jesus' victory over sin and death and His promise of peace encourage you as you live on mission?**
- **Why is it important to remember that, as Christ's ambassadors, we are on a mission of offering peace?**
- **What are some steps a believer can take in order to live as a disciple who is sent on God's mission by Jesus?**

Read John 20:24-29.

Jesus showed astounding kindness and care for Thomas. This doubting disciple heard the reports but now was seeing Jesus with his own eyes. Yet, when he witnessed Jesus suffered, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus met Thomas in his unbelief and offered up the proof for the truth of the resurrection. Questioning is not an assault on the truth but instead a helpful exercise that, for Thomas, resulted in deep faith. Faith cannot be forced or coerced. It must come from a deep belief that God is who He says He is and a confidence in what Jesus has done.

But how do we understand Jesus' response in verse 29? While Jesus affirmed Thomas' faith, He also seemed to issue a slight rebuke. Or did He? Jesus' statement here is what we call a beatitude—a statement of blessing. The most famous beatitudes Jesus spoke are recorded in Matthew 5:3-12. But here, after His resurrection, Jesus offered another. Rather than rebuking Thomas, Jesus anticipated a time when He would ascend to heaven and no longer be physically present on the earth. Once that happened, all those who believe would do so without the benefit of having seen their resurrected Lord.

This is our situation today. We do not see Jesus physically, in the flesh. We do not need to do so. Peter affirmed this by explaining to the churches that, even though we have not seen Jesus, we are still able to love Him and rejoice because we have received the goal of our faith: salvation (1 Pet. 1:8-9).

In fact, John would later reveal that he recorded certain events with one purpose in mind: so that we might believe Jesus was who He claimed to be and that we might have life in Him (John 20:30-31). In other words, John pointed to physical evidences and eye-witness testimonies to support belief in the historical resurrection of Christ. While we may want the type of evidence Jesus offered to Thomas when He told Thomas to observe His hands and side, we can't deny that Jesus has left us with other types of overwhelming evidence regarding His resurrection. And for those who look to the evidence—to Jesus—and believe, a blessing is given. How encouraging that Jesus' response to doubters is not one of anger, but one of loving encouragement for those who doubt because the resurrection really took place.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Just as the Father sent Jesus into the world, Jesus also sends us to be on mission.

John 20

23. "The forgiveness of sin mentioned in this passage (v. 23) does not mean we as individuals or as the church collective have the authority to declare sin forgiven in terms of absolution but in terms of proclamation."[4] We are permitted to proclaim on earth only what is already true in heaven through the leadership of the Holy Spirit, namely, that those who repent and believe the gospel message have received the forgiveness of sins.

24-29. Like Thomas, all of us struggle with doubt in one form or another. Even believers in Jesus have moments of doubt. In fact, it has even been noted that there are different kinds of doubts, and that these different types of doubts can vary from person to person.

For some people, the doubts are intellectual. In other words, the doubter finds something about Christianity that seems to contradict with something in science, history, philosophy, and so on. This means some people must overcome intellectual hurdles before having assurance about the truthfulness of Christianity.

For others, doubts grow out of an emotional state. People may find it easy to doubt God and/or His goodness in their lives because of a tragic event or because of deep depression and anxiety. It is also important to note that emotional doubts often masquerade as intellectual doubts; however, when we get to the root issue, it becomes apparent that the doubter is experiencing emotional pain and frustration. Since the pain and frustration is emotionally based, intellectual answers offer little help to those struggling with emotional doubts. For emotional doubters, a pastoral response with biblical counseling is what is most often needed.

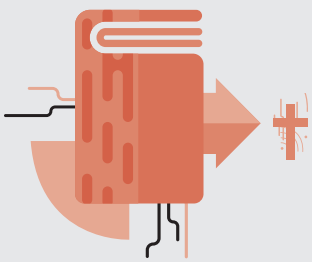
The third type of doubt is volitional, meaning the doubter makes a decision, or acts out of his or her own free will, to forsake the truth. Volitional doubt is essentially an unwillingness to obey. James refers to volitional doubt when he speaks of the indecisive or "double-minded" person (1:6-8). This kind of doubt can come from weak faith, stubbornness, arrogance, or a lack of repentance. For example, if a person is involved in an inappropriate physical relationship before marriage, then it would all of a sudden become "convenient" for that person to start doubting Christian teaching on purity and so on. We should take this kind of doubt seriously because it expresses itself in disobedience and rebellion.

Activity

Your students are to make motivational posters showing to show what it looks like, in our world today, to believe in spite of not seeing, and how blessed it is to do so. Let them prepare their posters and then share them. What are some other ways we can pursue the blessing of believing when we don't see?

(p. 97, DDG) ## Christ Connection

As God the Father sent His Son, God the Son sends His people to the world to call on sinners to place faith in Christ. As Christians, we are a sent people who are being formed in the image of our sending God and our suffering Savior.



JESUS PREPARES HIS DISCIPLES

John 20:19-29

JESS PREPARES HIS DISCIPLES

Just as the Father sent Jesus into the world, Jesus also sends us to be on mission.

JESUS CONNECTION

In the same way that God the Father sent His Son, Jesus sent His disciples. As followers of Jesus, we are sent anchored in God's peace, empowered by the Holy Spirit and made bold by the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

BOLDNESS – Choosing to do the right thing, even if you are afraid.

HEAD

Where were the disciples when Jesus appeared to them? Why?

What did Jesus send His disciples out to do?

HEART

Jesus appeared to His disciples multiple times in the 40 days after His resurrection. How might actually seeing Jesus increase their boldness in sharing about Him?

Fear and doubt are the enemies of boldness. Knowing Jesus was alive helped the disciples stop being afraid and removed Thomas' doubts. How might knowing that God gives us the same power through the Holy Spirit that raised Christ from the dead help us to live boldly for Jesus?

HANDS

The Bible promises that "nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). This doesn't mean that God will help us do whatever we want. Instead, it means that God enables us to live His way boldly, no matter what. Write Luke 1:37 in the center of a piece of construction paper or card stock. Then, cut out or draw pictures that show different ways we can help others, show compassion or live God's way. Pray and ask God to help you do those things boldly because with Him, nothing is impossible.